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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EUN](#)
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST: NOTES FROM MARCH 27-28 INFORMAL
FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING (GYMNICH)

Classified By: USEU POLITICAL M-C CHRIS DAVIS FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)
) .

¶1. (C/NF) An EU member country contact gave to the Charge the following text (paras 2-5), based on a Czech Presidency readout of the informal discussion on the Middle East among EU foreign ministers at the March 27-28 Gymnich, held in Hluboka in the Czech Republic. As is usual with the semi-annual Gymnich meeting, no other officials were allowed in the room. We have very slightly edited the transcript. Begin text:

¶2. (C/NF) QUOTE: On EU-Syria, the Commission (Benita Ferrero-Waldner), Greece, and Germany favored signing the Association Agreement, though Germany said we needed to think further about the timetable. Solana also agreed we should continue to engage Syria. Hungary said we should press Syria for more but agreed with the Commission that we needed an instrument to engage them. France also agreed we should push for more, but thought it good there had been movement from the Syrians. However, Belgium was skeptical about Syria's commitment. The United Kingdom said Syria was moving in the right direction, but that we should make the upgrade in the EU's relationship with them dependent on their commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative. The Netherlands agreed, adding that we should also not sign the agreement if there was no improvement in human rights.

¶3. (C/NF) QUOTE: In relation to the EU-Israel upgrade, almost all who spoke (including France, Portugal, Malta, Luxembourg, Denmark, Netherlands) thought to varying degrees that if the new Israeli government did not sign up to the peace process and a two-state solution, the EU should react. Ireland questioned the upgrade now, arguing that what was happening in Gaza was a disgrace; and Belgium was also skeptical. Hungary said the EU should be tough on issues like MEPP and settlements and that if Israel's response was not positive, there would be very little space for an upgrade; and Greece added we should be clear to Israel that the upgrade would be impossible in current circumstances. The United Kingdom said we should insist that all sides sign up to previous commitments. More generally on MEPP, he proposed exploring further what President Sarkozy had meant by the 'imposition' of a solution and said we needed a plan, not a process. France also said that we needed a new Palestinian unity government, be it before or after Doha, and Germany said that the EU should not speak against or reject such a government if one were possible. The Commission stressed the continuing humanitarian need in Gaza. 173 trucks a day were entering, but there needed to be more like 500-600.

¶4. (C/NF) QUOTE: On Iran, H/R Solana supported President Obama's message and said the Iranian reaction, while not positive, had also not been negative. The EU now needed to be ready for all eventualities, and this was key for the upcoming Obama meeting. Germany said it did not think the U.S.'s strategy was yet completely fixed, so it was too early to be optimistic.

15. (C/NF) QUOTE: The Czechs concluded rather oddly, and were challenged by the United Kingdom, supported by the Netherlands. The United Kingdom said we should stick to the January GAERC conclusions on support for the Egyptian initiative on Palestinian reconciliation; that on the EU-Israel upgrade, the key was for the new Israeli government to respect the two-state solution (France and Belgium agreed with this); that we needed to engage with Syria, but also press them to fulfill the necessary conditions; and that on Iran, we needed to stick to the dual-track policy. Solana noted there would be very little time for discussion at the EU-U.S. Summit, so we would need simple messages.

END QUOTATION of notes provided by an EU member country.

MURRAY

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